
**State Government & Tribal
Affairs Committee**

HB 1157

Brief Description: Regarding the acceptance of gifts by state officials.

Sponsors: Representative Hurst.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits state officers and state employees from accepting gifts.

Hearing Date: 1/23/08

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

State ethics laws prohibit state officers and state employees from accepting or receiving a gift in excess of \$50 where it could be reasonably expected that the gift would influence the vote, action, or judgement of the officer or employee or be considered as part of a reward for action or inaction.

"Gift" is defined as anything of economic value for which no consideration is given. A "gift" does not include such things as:

- items from family members or friends that are clearly not intended to gain access to or to influence;
- items related to the outside business of the recipient not related to performance of official duties;
- items exchanged among officials and employees or a social event hosted or sponsored by a state officer or state employee for coworkers;
- reasonable expenses incurred that are related to a speech, presentation, appearance, or trade mission made in an official capacity;
- course fees and reasonable travel expenses related to seminars and educational programs sponsored by governmental or nonprofit professional, educational, trade, or charitable association or institution;

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- items returned by the recipient within 30 days of acceptance;
- campaign contributions reported under Chapter 42.17 RCW;
- discounts available to an individual as a member of an employee group or occupation;
- awards, prizes, scholarships, or other items provided in recognition of academic or scientific achievement; and
- items a state officer or employee is authorized to accept by law.

Many items are presumed not to influence and may be accepted without regard to the \$50 limit, such as:

- unsolicited flowers and plants;
- promotional items of nominal value;
- tokens of appreciation;
- items related to a review for eventual use or acquisition;
- information material; and
- food and beverages consumed at hosted receptions related to the state officer's or state employee's official duties.

Summary of Bill:

No state officer or state employee may accept any gift, regardless of value, except for those presumed not to influence.

Summary of Bill:

No legislator or employee of the Legislature may attend a seminar, education program, speech, presentation, appearance, or trade mission unless expenses related to the event relates to the performance of his or her official duties and are paid by the state. No legislator or employee of the Legislature may accept food or beverages received in association with any event that is part of his or her official duties in excess of \$50.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.